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There may have been a lot of controversy during the 2009 Super Bowl, but the nearly 700 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines at the Fort Dix Super Bowl party at Griffith Field House were in perfect accord: it was a great event staged as a thank-you for those in uniform.

The thank-you had food – lots and lots of food -- three wide screens, games and prizes provided by the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation and a healthy rivalry between Cardinal and Steelers fans.

“It was advertised as a party, but we didn’t expect anything like this,” said Sgt. Cristyl Burton, 56th Brigade Combat Team from Pennsylvania. “We all walked in the gym and it was like WOW!”

For the fifth year, sponsorship of the Fort Dix Super Bowl XLIII bash for mobilized military was led by Braun Research Inc. with Honorary Commander Paul Braun and his assistant Ivy Halton lining up a special event for those serving their country.

Third Congressional District Congressman John Adler also dropped in for a visit.

This year’s extravaganza was the biggest yet, and one of the best.

“It’s always a great event for me,” said Braun, who welcomed Soldiers, handed out doughnuts and kept an eye on the score. “But watching these Soldiers stand at attention for the national anthem makes it really special.”

The crowd at Fort Dix joined celebrations nationwide as the military shared the Tampa, Fla. Event with flyovers and the pre-game presentation of the colors.

Army Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the U.S. Central Command, drew a louder cheer from the crowd than the quarterbacks when he stepped up to perform the ceremonial coin toss for the game.

Obviously abiding by the adage that life is uncertain and one should eat dessert first, the horde of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines gobbled doughnuts and other treats before heading for the dinner buffet table. There they were faced with a feast provided by food sponsors Olive Garden, On the Border, Hooters, Starbucks, Veterans of Foreign Wars, United Communities, and Dixon Marketing Associates, Inc.

“It was just a real honor to be asked to participate in this event,” said Stephanie Ramsey from Olive Garden Restaurant. “What we didn’t realize was that it would be so much fun.”

Diners at the feast had many grateful comments, but the most common question was “Can we go back for seconds?”

Spc. Daryn Westley, a recent arrival at the Fort Dix slated to join the 56th SBCT in Iraq, said the event will be a super memory for him. “I was a little down thinking I would miss the party my friends usually throw for the Super Bowl, but being here not only with all my fellow Soldiers but with all of these great people who have been so generous to us, well its something you just never forget.”

Most of the troops were Steelers fans, so when the game tightened up in the second half, cheering and booing increased in volume. The final fingernail-biting touchdown pass that gave the game to the Steelers 27 to 23, was the high point – and the high volume – for the crowd.

Fort Dix Commander Col. Ron Thaxton handed out thanks and commanders' coins to sponsors and volunteers, with special note of the any hours put in by the field house staff and the cadets of the New Jersey National Guard Youth Challenge.